



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 31 October 2022

by Peter Rose BA MRTPI DMS MCMI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 November 2022

Appeal A Ref: APP/W5780/W/21/3289078

Wycliffe House, 245-247 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, IG1 4TD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Tier One Homes (Ilford) Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref: 4459/20, dated 21 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 9 July 2021.
 - The development proposed is fourth floor addition on roof to create 1x2 bedroom self-contained apartment with terrace and associated waste/refuse, cycle store and car parking. Listed building consent sought under application reference 4461/20.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/W5780/Y/21/3289080

Wycliffe House, 245-247 Cranbrook Road, Ilford, IG1 4TD

- The appeal is made under section 20 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant listed building consent.
 - The appeal is made by Tier One Homes (Ilford) Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref: 4461/20, dated 21 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 9 July 2021.
 - The works proposed are fourth floor addition on roof to create 1x2 bedroom self-contained apartment with terrace and associated waste/refuse, cycle store and car parking. Full planning consent sought under application reference 4459/20.
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Decisions

1. **Appeal A** and **Appeal B** are each dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The applications were revised pre-determination to comprise one additional unit only, and that amended scheme is the basis for these appeals.
3. The refusal of planning permission cites at Reason 2 an absence of proposed mitigation in relation to the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation. That objection has been resolved between the parties¹, and requires no further attention as part of these appeals.

Main issue

4. The main issue for **Appeal A** and for **Appeal B** is the effect of the proposed scheme upon the special architectural and historic interest of the former Wycliffe Congregational Church, a Grade II listed building, and, in particular,

¹ Email correspondence of 10 January 2022 and related refers

whether or not the proposal would preserve the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises a church building of an Art Nouveau Gothic design dating from 1907. The original building is adjoined to the rear by a substantial extension which was developed as offices in the 1980's. The church building was also previously occupied as a local theatre and the site has since been converted into residential use.
6. The church building's main frontage faces onto Cranbrook Road and is finished in red brick and yellow terracotta. It displays a wide centre gable with large tripartite window, and a relatively short square tower to one side with corner buttresses and parapet. Windows include characteristic leaded art nouveau patterns. The existing rear addition is of a very dissimilar and relatively plain modern design.
7. The significance of the heritage asset principally arises from the church's remaining front outer shell. This main frontage appears to be in broadly original form and well preserved. It is an impressive townscape feature and remains testimony to the site's heritage.
8. The church was built of a form and scale to be seen and be appreciated by its surrounding local community. This is evidenced by the inspiring and ornate front elevation, the general scale of the building itself, and by the relatively commanding height and prominence of its tower with crenelated parapet. All these features contribute to a highly distinctive and intentionally imposing presence.
9. The proposal would add an additional recessed storey to the modern rear addition. The church building itself stands at some three to four storeys with the tower rising further above. The proposal would increase the height of the rear addition to five storeys. There would be no direct effect on the fabric of the church elevation to the front, and the proposed extension and church building would not be jointly visible from Mansfield Road to the rear.
10. The church building itself largely restricts immediate views of the existing addition from Cranbrook Road, but it is still partially visible more widely. The visual relationship of the existing addition to the church building is evident in important central views from Park Avenue. From there, the main frontage to the church building is seen set against an intrusive and substantial structure immediately behind, and one of contrasting form and appearance. Indeed, the Council itself acknowledges that the existing addition is not considered to be a sensitive extension to the listed building due to its scale and unsympathetic flat-roofed form.² A similar assessment is made by the Council's independent Historic Buildings Consultant.³
11. Further harm to the asset would arise from the inevitable exposure of the proposal in public views of the church elevation. Although respective heights mean such exposure might only be evident away from the immediate frontage, this is still highly relevant as the church building was clearly conceived as a landmark feature to be experienced within a wider setting. Such more distant

² See references under 'Design' in both Officer reports

³ See letter dated 1 June 2021

views are therefore important to an appreciation of its historic significance. Although less evident at distance, its significance remains readily apparent by virtue of its scale and form, and any filtering by existing tree lines in views from Park Avenue is limited. This relatively distant relationship also underlines the importance of upper views of the elevation and within which the extension would be evident.

12. The existing addition already appears as an insensitive presence in the original immediate context of the church building. Notwithstanding revisions made to its design, another storey as proposed would further intrude, crowd and clutter the asset's already incongruous backdrop viewed at distance from the front.
13. By projecting above the tower, and in such close proximity to it, the proposal would also further undermine the tower's historic contribution in being seen to be able to command distant views outwards, around and beyond.
14. Historic England makes clear that the cumulative impact of incremental small-scale changes may have as great an effect on the significance of a heritage asset as a larger scale change. Where the significance of a heritage asset has been compromised in the past by unsympathetic development to an asset itself or its setting, consideration still needs to be given to whether additional change would further detract from, or can enhance, the significance of the asset in order to accord with national policies. It identifies that negative change could include severing the last link to part of the history of an asset or between the asset and its original setting.⁴
15. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) makes clear that heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource, and requires them to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance. When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, it requires great weight to be given to an asset's conservation, and irrespective of the scale of harm. There is a strong presumption against granting consent which would harm a listed building because the desirability of preserving the heritage asset is a matter of statutory duty and therefore a factor of considerable importance and weight.
16. Nevertheless, change to heritage assets is inevitable and may only be harmful when significance is damaged. The nature and importance of the significance as affected will dictate the proportionate response to assessing that change and its possible justification.⁵
17. The Framework requires that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Where a scheme would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, as in this instance, the Framework requires such harm to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
18. A principal benefit of the scheme would be one additional dwelling within a borough experiencing significant unmet housing need and striving to meet the Government's housing delivery targets. There would be some economic benefit in terms of construction and in subsequent support for local services arising from occupation of an extra unit of accommodation. The appeal site has a

⁴ Historic England's Managing Significance in Decision-Taking in the Historic Environment, Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2

⁵ As for 4

sustainable location with excellent access to public transport and to local services. A sedum roof with PV cells would be provided.

19. The appellant suggests it is intended to use some of the revenue from the scheme to enhance and preserve the listed building⁶, but no clear details of any such formal arrangements are before these appeals. Any possible implications for the service charges of existing occupiers would be a private, not public benefit. I do not consider there would be public townscape benefits to the roof of the existing addition. Rather, the proposal would simply exacerbate its existing uncomfortable townscape relationship to the church building.
20. Taken together, I consider the public benefits of the scheme to be limited, and of a scale insufficient to out-weigh the harm arising for this statutorily designated and protected heritage asset.
21. Accordingly, policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance, and which include listed buildings, provide a clear reason for refusing the development proposed in heritage terms. By virtue of Framework paragraph 11.d)i., the presumption in favour of granting permission on account of the authority's inability to demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites and related delivery performance is thereby not engaged, and this is a material consideration for my final planning balance.

Other matters

22. Local interested parties raise a number of other issues, including parking, refuse, cycle storage, property values, overshadowing, loss of privacy, energy efficiency and emergency access. None of these matters are cited as reasons for objection by the Council and I have little evidence before me to suggest that permission and/or consent should be withheld on those terms.

Conclusions

23. In relation to **Appeal A** and **Appeal B**, the scheme would be harmful to the special architectural and historic interest of the former Wycliffe Congregational Church and, in particular, would fail to preserve the listed asset.
24. In further regard to **Appeal A**, the development would be contrary to Policies HC1 and D3 of the London Plan⁷, and contrary to Policies LP26 and LP33 of the Council's Local Plan⁸. These seek, amongst other things, for the Borough's heritage assets to be conserved, protected and enhanced in a manner appropriate to their special interest, character, appearance, and significance. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole, and other material considerations do not indicate a decision to the contrary.
25. For the reasons given above, I conclude that **Appeal A** and **Appeal B** should each be dismissed.

Peter Rose
INSPECTOR

⁶ Appellant's Heritage Statement refers

⁷ Mayor of London's The London Plan, The Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London March 2021

⁸ Redbridge Local Plan 2015-2030 March 2018